

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

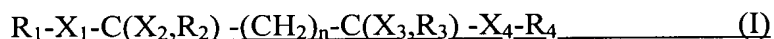
Claim 1 (currently amended): A process for preparing prepolymers containing isocyanate groups by reacting

- a) diisocyanates with
- b) compounds having at least two hydrogen atoms which are reactive toward isocyanate groups in the presence of
- c) catalysts, and subsequently separating off the excess monomeric diisocyanates,

wherein

the diisocyanates a) used are unsymmetrical diisocyanates and the catalysts c) used are organometallic catalysts and these organometallic catalysts are removed, blocked or deactivated before the monomeric diisocyanates are separated off

wherein when said organometallic catalysts are blocked or deactivated, blocking or deactivation is by use of at least one compound selected from the group consisting of a Lewis-acid metal deactivator and a metal deactivator of the general formula (I)



where  $R_1$  and  $R_4$  are, independently of one another, any organic radicals such as a linear, branched or cyclic alkyl radical, a linear, branched or cyclic alkenyl radical, a linear, branched or cyclic hydroxy, halogen, amino or thioalkyl radical,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are each, independently of one another, either nothing or hydrogen,  $X_1$  and  $X_4$  are each, independently of one another, either nothing or oxygen,  $X_2$  and  $X_3$  are Lewis-acid substituents, for example a halogen, O, OH,  $NH_2$ ,  $NO_2$ , SH and n is an integer from 1 to 5.

Claim 2 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein unsymmetrical diisocyanates used are tolylene 2,4'-diisocyanate, diphenylmethane 2,4'-diisocyanate and/or isophorone diisocyanate.

Claim 3 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the unsymmetrical diisocyanate used is diphenylmethane 2,4'-diisocyanate.

Claim 4 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the metal catalysts are selected from the group consisting of organometallic compounds of the metals of groups IVA, VA, IVB, VB and VIIB.

Claim 5 (previously presented): The process according to claim 4, wherein the metal catalysts contain ligands.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The process according to claim 4, wherein the ligands used are carboxylate anions, alkoxides, enolates, thiolates, mercaptides and alkyl ligands and combinations thereof.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The process according to claim 4, wherein the ligands are used in the form of chelating systems.

Claim 8 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the metal catalysts are selected from the group consisting of dimethyltin, dibutyltin and dioctyltin dilaurate, bis(dodecylmercaptide), bis(2-ethylhexylthioglycolate), diacetate, maleate, bithioglycerol; octyltin tris(2-ethylhexylthioglycolate), bis( $\beta$ -methoxycarbonyl-ethyl)tin

dilaurate, tetraisopropyl titanate, tetra-tert-butyl orthotitanate, tetra(2-ethylhexyl)titanium and bis(ethylacetoacetato)titanium diisopropoxide, bismuth(III) tris(2-ethylhexanoate) and bismuth laurate.

Claim 9 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the metal catalysts are homogeneous catalysts.

Claim 10 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the metal catalysts are heterogeneous catalysts.

Claim 11 (previously presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the metal catalysts have been applied to supports.

Claims 12-13 (canceled):

Claim 14 (currently amended): The process according to claim ~~13~~ 1, wherein said organometallic catalysts are blocked or deactivated with ~~[[the]]~~ compounds of the general formula (I) which are organic carboxylic acids which are functionalized on the  $\beta$ -carbon atom (C3) relative to the carbon atom (C1) of the acid group (-C(1)OOH) from the group consisting of  $\beta$ -hydroxycarboxylic acids,  $\beta$ -aminocarboxylic acids,  $\beta$ -ketocarboxylic acids and 1,3-dicarboxylic acids and their esters.

Claim 15 (currently amended): The process according to claim ~~13~~ 1, wherein said organometallic catalysts are blocked or deactivated with ~~[[the]]~~ compounds of the general formula (I) which are selected from the group consisting of citric acid, malic acid, tartaric

acid, acetoacetic acid, 2-chloroacetoacetic acid, benzoylacetic acid, acetonedicarboxylic acid, dehydroacetic acid, 3-oxovaleric acid and malonic acid and also the associated esters in each case.

Claim 16 (previously presented): The prepolymer which contains isocyanate groups and has a content of monomeric diisocyanates of from 0.01 to 0.5% by weight, based on the weight of the prepolymer, and a content of ABA structures of at least 80% and can be prepared according to claim 1.

Claim 17 (previously presented): The method  $\epsilon$  for the deactivation of organometallic catalysts in the preparation of prepolymers containing isocyanate groups comprising contacting a organometallic catalyst with the compound of the general formula (I) of claim 13.